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POOR QUALITY ORIGINA

The Pag's back – ready to rock

Montreal singer at Spectrum tomorrow

By LUCINDA CHODAN
of The Gazette

In the early 1970s, a dynamic, black-maned kid from the northern reaches of Montreal was at the top of the Canadian rock world.

Singles like *Louise* and *Le temps presse* and *J'entends frapper* were burning up the charts in Quebec. English Canadians were buying up *Rainshowers* and *Lovin' You Ain't Easy* and *Some Sing, Some Dance*.

Michel Pagliaro had become Quebec's undisputed king of rock 'n' roll," according to rock historian Martin Melhuish — and the first person ever to have gold records in both French and English in Canada.

More than a decade after those early successes, Pag is back.

After a seven-year hiatus in Paris, the 38-year-old singer has released a hard-driving French-language single, *Les Bombes*.

He made a brief return to the city's concert scene when he opened for David Bowie Aug. 30.

And the province's once — and perhaps future — king of rock 'n' roll makes a full-fledged return to the boards in Montreal tomorrow night, when he starts a two-night stand at the Spectrum.

What lured Pagliaro back to the concert scene?

'Needed a change'

"It was ready to play again," says the singer, sipping a cup of cappuccino before a rehearsal this week. "For a while, I lost a little of the passion — I needed a change. But by last year, I had accumulated a lot of ideas, and the need to perform was coming back to me more and more. Now I'm doing what I like to do — I'm playing again."

That's what Pagliaro has spent most of his life doing. He started his first band, the String Men, when he was 15, playing school dances. By the time he was 17, he'd hooked up with the Chanceliers, one of the "Ye Ye" bands that earned a living — and an enthusiastic following — doing French versions of English hits. The Chanceliers' big hit: *P'tit Poppy*, a 1965 adaptation of *I'm Your Puppet*.

Pagliaro's first solo outing was in 1968, with *Comme d'habitude*. But it wasn't till the beginning of the '70s that his solo career really took off. A string of hits in both official languages and a solid reputation soon drew the attention of the international press.

American journalist Richard Meltzer, a writer for *Rolling Stone*, *Creem* and *Crawdaddy*, cruised north in '74 to check out the Montreal music scene. He called Pagliaro's English album "a ... dessy of a piece of vinyl, as solid as anything released on the Angle-Am scene in the last 10-12 seasons."

He wasn't alone in that assessment. Rock writers from publications as diverse as *Phonograph Record Magazine* and *Cashbox* raved about the Montreal boy with the big, raunchy rock sound.

Burned up energy

But somehow, nothing ever really happened south of the border for Pagliaro. North of 45, he toured, he built two recording studios in Montreal, he produced his and other people's records. By 1988, he had made four English albums, about 16 French ones — and burned up a lot of energy along the way. Pagliaro had had it. He took a break.

He hung out in New York and Los Angeles, then drifted to Paris. For two years, the singer didn't do anything remotely connected with music — "I looked at the trees, stuff like that," he laughs.

Then a chance meeting with French singing star Jacques Higelin led to an opportunity for Pagliaro to produce Higelin's album, *Aie*. He produced Higelin's spectacular show at the Palais Omnisports de Bercy — and the triple album that resulted from it.

He also served as technical and artistic director for *Les Chanteurs sans frontières*, the French equivalent of the *We Are the World* project. If Michel Pagliaro the performer was little known in France, Michel Pagliaro the producer was carving out a big niche for himself.

Then, late last year, Pagliaro came home for Christmas. At the urging of friends and acquaintances, he stayed on to relaunch the solo career he left behind seven years before.

"But I was ready to start playing," Pagliaro says. "It happened to be in Quebec that I started doing this again. It could have been in France, it could have been in Bulgaria — I really wanted to play again."

The first thing he did was lock himself into a room and write songs. Then he went looking for a band.

"I wound up in a lot of little clubs everywhere from downtown to Ville St. Laurent, listening for musicians I liked," Pagliaro says.

The band that resulted from Pagliaro's search — guitarist Jimmy Bakolias ("Jimmy James"), bassist, Eric Bergeron, drummer John McColgan, percussionist Gordon Adamson and keyboard player Phil Bech — headed into a studio for the *Les Bombes/Dangereux* 45 the singer released this summer.

They also accompanied him in his Olympic Stadium gig, where the plug was pulled only 35 minutes into the group's opening set so that the second act, Duran Duran, could take the stage.

"Was I pleased about the gig? It's hard to say we were pleased — we didn't really have time to get pleased. I think it was a good thing to get a chance to play in front of a lot of people," Pagliaro says tactfully. "It's too bad we didn't really have a chance to play what we were supposed to. The time ran out — we were playing in the middle of a song.

"As far as I'm concerned that's 10 million years ago already."

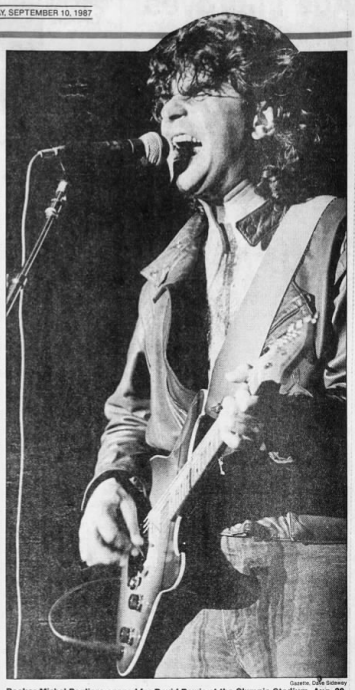
Heading into studio

This weekend's Spectrum gigs will give Pagliaro and crew a chance to make up for that abbreviated homecoming. Then, after that, he plans to head into a studio somewhere on the continent to record an album of English-language tunes that Pagliaro has been crafting over the last six months.

"Last time around, I had records released here and in England, but I never had a single thing released in the States — that was a real problem," he says.

"The problem was never the artistic side, it was always the business side. I don't want that to happen this time around. We've got a really hot band, and we're going to keep practising and playing and developing this material until we pare things down to the bone and we get a nice, nice, nice album.

"Then I'll be happy."



Gazette, Dave Sidaway

Rocker Michel Pagliaro opened for David Bowie at the Olympic Stadium, Aug. 30.

World tour kicks off in Tokyo

TOKYO (Reuter) — Michael Jackson, with an entourage of 120 people and a chimpanzee, arrived in Japan yesterday to begin his first solo world tour.

Wearing a check shirt and his usual sunglasses, Jackson was greeted by screams from hundreds of girls at Tokyo's international airport.

More than 300,000 people are expected to see Jackson at his 18 concerts in Japan. Tickets for all concerts sold out immediately, and scalpers have pushed the price of a seat beyond $900 Cdn.

The staid economic daily *Nihon Keizai Shimbun* carried a report, under the headline Michael Typhoon Lands Today, saying the Jackson tour may be the biggest musical event by a foreign artist ever in Japan.

Jackson last appeared in Japan in 1973, as a member of the Jackson Five.

The tour kicks off Saturday, with the first concert in Tokyo.

AP

Michael Jackson arrives in Tokyo: Scalpers push price of ticket past $900 Cdn.

Jazz friends, fans rally 'round Woody

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Woody Herman's friends and fans blew one clear, sweet note to the jazz great yesterday, offering cash and even their homes to the ailing and impoverished musician.

"I think the whole jazz community has really rallied around the flag, and people outside the community have rallied around the flag," said George Tappaport, president of the U.S. National Academy of Jazz.

"Of course they are sad about the circumstances."

On Tuesday, Los Angeles jazz radio station KKGO agreed to pay the $4,600 US back rent owed by the clarinetist, and celebrities such as Frank Sinatra and Tony Bennett offered help.

"We're just overwhelmed," KKGO official Linda Davis said yesterday.

The station had received about $6,800 by yesterday morning, and Rappaport said money was coming in too fast to count. Davis said several of the contributors are celebrities who asked not to be named.

Herman, 74, had fallen four months behind in rent owed to businessman William Little, who bought Herman's home at 41 years in a tax auction. Herman has been bedridden by a series of heart attacks, said his daughter, Ingrid Herman Reese.

Lawyer Kirk Pasich worked out an agreement in Superior Court with Little, under which station KKGO will pay the back rent and Reese will meet the rent of $1,150 a month in the future.

KKGO, in association with the academy, will hold a benefit concert for Herman on Oct. 23 at the Wadsworth Theatre in Los Angeles. Bennett will headline the show, with other acts to be announced.

Numerous celebrities and friends of the musician have been in touch since it was learned Herman was facing eviction, said the family's account, Joan Resnick.

"Apparently we're going to get all kinds of donations from people, and it will be needed because the family is destitute," she said.

Reese's occupation is secretary to her father, Resnick said. Reese, 45, lives with her father in the Hollywood Hills home, which was previously owned by Humphrey Bogart.

Reese said such celebrities as Sinatra, Rosemary Clooney, Bennett and bandleader Stan Getz have offered financial assistance.

Pasich said the musician's financial troubles began in the 1960s when a business manager didn't withhold payroll taxes for three years. Most of the money Herman has made since 1968 has gone to pay $1.6 million in tax liens, Pasich said.

"He's done hundreds of records, but unless the jazz person is a crossover artist like George Benson, the records don't sell enough to recover the recording costs," said Pasich, who also sits on the board of directors of the jazz academy.

Herman, who led a collection of musicians collectively known as the Thundering Herd, has received three Grammys, including back-to-back awards for Best Jazz Performance by a Big Band in 1973 and 1974 and a 1963 tribute for Best Instrumental Jazz Performance by a Large Group.

His old standbys include *Apple Honey*, *Northwest Passage* and *Caledonia*.

John Griffin's Pop Scene column, which usually runs Thursdays in The Gazette, returns next week.

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